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R 051745Z MAY 80
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2653
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3316
E.O. 12065: GDS 5/5/86 (LAWRENCE, L.) OR-AMB
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION KEEPS PROTEST PEACEFUL
REF: KINGSTON 3208

1. C-ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. THE DEMONSTRATION TO COMMEMORATE THE DEATHS OF JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (JLP) SUPPORTERS PASSED WITH NO INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE IN SO FAR AS WE KNOW. WHILE THE TURNOUT DID NOT MATCH THE OPPOSITION PARTY'S EXPECTATION, THE EFFORT RECEIVED A GOOD DEAL OF PUBLICITY AND A MAJORITY OF THE BUSINESSES IN DOWNTOWN KINGSTON
WERE CLOSED. END SUMMARY.

3. THE OPPOSITION JLP'S "PEACEFUL ANTI-VIOLENCE" PROTEST

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HELD ON MAY 1 TO COINCIDE WITH THE FUNERAL OF THREE OF THE PEOPLE KILLED IN THE "GOLD STREET MASSCRE" (KINGSTON 2969) SHOWED MIXED RESULTS. ON THE ONE HAND, SEAGA WAS ABLE TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE TO KEEP THE DEMONSTRATION PEACEFUL AND A LARGE PART OF THE KINGSTON BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL COMMUNITY WAS CLOSED DOWN. ON THE OTHER HAND THE JLP HAD HOPED FOR CROWDS OF 50 THOUSAND OR MORE AT THE FUNERAL. THE GOVERNMENT OWNED RADIO STATION, RJR, ESTIMATED THE CROWD AT 4,000 WHILE EVEN THE OPPOSITION ESTIMATES ARE ONLY IN THE 10-12 THOUSAND RANGE.

4. APPARENTLY, EVEN THE AMOST COMPLETE SHUT DOWN OF CENTRAL KINGSTON WAS MORE INSPED BY FEAR AMONG THE BUSINESSES THAT VIOLENCE WOULD ERUPT, THAN BY AN COMMITMENT TO SEAGA'S CALL FOR A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST VIOLENCE. NEVERTHELESS, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF CHARGES BY NATIONAL SECURITY MINISTER THOMPSON THAT THE OPPOSITION PLANNED VIOLENCE (REFTEL)

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AND WAS THREATENING BUSINESSMEN INTO CLOSING THEIR OPERATIONS, THE PEACEFUL NATURE OF THE DEMONSTRATION CAN BE VIEWED A SUCESS SHOWING THE JLP'S CONTROL OVER THEIR SUPPORTERS.

5. COMMENT: THE QUESTIONS MUST BE STILL ASKED, WHY SUCH A LOW TURNOUT AND WHY DID THE VIOLENT ELEMENTS, WHO ARE PRESUMABLY INTERESTED IN CAUSING AS MUCH TROUBLE AS POSSIBLE. NOT CAUSE TROUBLT? IT IS A BIT TOO EARLY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS. WE ARE NOW FINDING OUT IN RETROPSECT THAT THE JLP DID NOT REALLY WHEEL OUT ITS ORGANIZATION TO MAKE SURE THERE WAS A CROWD. NO BUSSES WERE HIRED, FOR INSTANCE, NO HANDBILLS WERE DISTRIBUTED. THE ADVERTISING WAS MINIMAL, AND STRESSED A KIND OF DIGNIFIED. NO PARTISAN EVENT (RELATIVELY SPEAKING) ON THE OTHERSIDE, THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN A DELIBERATE EFFORT BY THOSE WHO CONROL THE PNP THUGS.

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TO KEEP THEIR GANGS AWAY. PERHAPS THE PUBLICIZED PRESENCE OF CORRESPONDENTS FROM OUTSIDE MEDIA WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR (IN FACT, INSOFAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE, THE ONLY OUTSIDE MEDIA TO SHOW UP WERE A TV CREW FROM GERMANY AND A TIME MAGAZINE PHOTOGRAPHER)

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